

## 6.0 OPEN SPACE ELEMENT

### 6.1 INTRODUCTION

Open space areas in the Town of Los Gatos add greatly to the character of the Town, helping to create a unique and pleasant atmosphere for Town residents and visitors. This element addresses the specific concerns of the Town in relation to effectively acquiring, utilizing, and preserving open space areas. This element provides an open space inventory as mandated by State law. The Open Space Element is further segmented into the following issue areas:

- ☐ Acquisition of Open Space Areas;
- ☐ Access to Open Space Areas;
- ☐ Open Space and Existing Neighborhoods;
- ☐ Open Space and Hillside Preservation;
- ☐ Open Space and Development.

The following three tools have been helpful to the Town in the past in terms of identifying open space issues and creating policies that effectively address such issues:

Williamson Act - The California Land Conservation Act of 1965 provides that a legislative body may establish open space preserves by entering into contractual agreement with private land owners. This act was designed to give tax relief to those wishing to remove their generally agricultural property from the pressures of urbanization. Williamson Act contracts run for ten years, are automatically renewable on an annual basis, and may be terminated by the initiative of either the property owner or the legislative body; but must have the sanction of the legislative body before the contract is terminated.

Planned Development - The Town has utilized this development technique to provide both public and private open space areas. The Planned Development approach permits complete freedom of design which has in every case resulted in large areas of open space being retained in perpetuity. Development densities cannot exceed that projected by the General Plan. Through the use of this tool, the Town has been successful in retaining open space.

Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District - The Town has encouraged acquisition of properties by the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District and has also joined with the District for the purchase of the Novitiate property.

### 6.2 OPEN SPACE INVENTORY

The Government Code requires that every open space element includes an inventory of public and private open space lands. The statute also requires that the inventory includes lands in the following four categories: (1) The preservation of natural resources; (2) The managed production of resources; (3) Outdoor recreation; and (4) Public health and safety. A given piece of land can fall into one or more of these categories. Rather than list lands by these categories, the Town has developed the following Table to show open space by acreage, and percentages of total Town land:

Table 5.1  
**GENERAL PLAN LAND USE ESTIMATED ACREAGES; OPEN SPACE**

General Plan Category	Number of Parcels	Acreages	Percentage of Town
<b>Public:</b>			
Public	14	15.4	0.132
<b>Schools:</b>			
Schools	17	118.6	0.161
<b>Open Space:</b>			
Open Space	159	548.3	1.504
Agriculture	20	221.2	0.189
Mid-Peninsula Open Space District	13	798.2	0.123
<b>Total:</b>	223	1701.7	2.109

Source: RBF and Associates, 1999

### 5.3 GOALS, POLICIES, IMPLEMENTING STRATEGY

#### ISSUE 1:

Open space acquisition should be a priority for the Town as it enhances the quality of life for residents and visitors. Lands that can be used to protect the safety of residents should be acquired as open space areas.

#### Goal:

- O.G.1.1 To acquire open space areas within the Town of Los Gatos, particularly lands which provide recreational uses and will protect the public health, welfare, and safety of residents and visitors (e.g.: lands in flood plains, watershed lands, or lands subject to fire or geologic hazards).

#### Policies:

- O.P.1.1 Promote coordination with all levels of government in utilizing available resources for the acquisition and development of open space
- O.P.1.2 Use open space acquisitions to support the programs in the Conservation and Safety Elements of this General Plan.
- O.P.1.3 Acquire and maintain open space areas in order to define the Town's southern boundary as passive open space.
- O.P.1.4 Acquire parcels via fees or purchase of easements.
- O.P.1.5 Promote a system of Town parks and trails and maximize the use of public utility easements, flood control channels, school grounds, and other quasi-public areas for recreational uses and playfields.

- O.P.1.6 Maintain adequate open space along the Route 85 corridor as property is developed.

**Implementing Strategies:**

- O.I.1.1 Tools: Encourage the use of Williamson Act contracts and Planned Development applications as a means to preserve open space.

Time Frame: On-going  
Responsible Party: Planning and Town Council

- O.I.1.2 Guidelines: Establish guidelines for developmental review that protect:

- a. Wildlife habitat.
- b. Natural watershed lands.
- c. Historic sites.
- d. Aesthetically significant sites.

Time Frame: 2000-2005  
Responsible Party: Planning, Engineering and Parks

- O.I.1.3 Safety: Use the policies and implementation measures of the Safety Element to restrict development in safety hazard areas.

Time Frame: On-going  
Responsible Party: Planning and Engineering

- O.I.1.4 Open space acquisition: Institute an acquisition program consistent with the Housing Element that includes, fee purchase, easement dedications and land donations. Areas to be considered: Novitiate, hillside open space, additional park sites, closed school sites and large land-locked parcels.

Time Frame: On-going  
Responsible Party: Parks Commission, Town Manager and Town Council

- O.I.1.5 Needs assessment: Assess the need for additional developed parks and playfields in the Town of Los Gatos.

Time Frame: 2000-2005  
Responsible Party: Parks Commission

- O.I.1.6 Scenic Easements: Consider establishing a program to acquire scenic easements through dedication or purchase.

Time Frame: 2001-2002  
Responsible Party: Parks and Planning

**ISSUE: 2**

Open Space areas, that are open to the public, particularly regional open space areas, need to be easily accessible. Open space areas shall provide access for equestrians and bicycles, as well as address the needs of persons who are physically disabled.

*Access to Open  
Space Areas*

**Goal:**

- O.G.2.1 To make open space areas within the Town accessible to all residents of and visitors to the Town as appropriate.

**Policies:**

- O.P.2.1 Provide access that is consistent with types and locations of open space areas.
- O.P.2.2 Provide adequate access to open space areas and related facilities for the physically disabled.
- O.P.2.3 Consider access from new residential developments to open space where appropriate.
- O.P.2.4 Connect open space areas via a system of trails.
- O.P.2.5 Locate, develop, and maintain access roads in ways that do not create negative impacts on open space areas.

**Implementing Strategies:**

- O.I.2.1 Access: All developed open space shall have access from streets. All natural open space shall have access by trails or local streets, with adequate protection of adjacent residential areas.

Time Frame: 2001  
Responsible Party: Engineering

- O.I.2.2 Trail dedication: Include trail dedication as a condition of approval for any development which includes a section of trail shown on the Trails Plan.

Time Frame: On-going  
Responsible Party: Parks, Planning and Deciding Body

- O.I.2.3 Disabled access: Provide disabled facilities in and accessibility to all developed parks, unless they would be detrimental to public safety or welfare.

Time Frame: On-going  
Responsible Party: Parks, Building and Engineering

**ISSUE 3:**

Open space should be provided in unobtrusive ways. Open Space should be a benefit to, not a burden on existing neighborhoods. Open Space in existing neighborhoods should be provide in unobtrusive ways.

**Goal:**

- O.G.3.1 To maintain open space areas and parks that enhance existing residential neighborhoods. Create open space areas and parks that blend into existing neighborhoods and other Town features.

**Policies:**

- O.P.3.1 Provide open space in residential areas.
- O.P.3.2 Maintain the Town's high standards for landscaping and tree preservation, helping to maintain cohesiveness between existing neighborhoods and surrounding open space areas.
- O.P.3.3 Utilize private and public landscaping to preserve areas along Town streets.
- O.P.3.4 Provide access to natural open space, protecting the safety, privacy, and security of adjacent residential areas.
- O.P.3.5 Preserve open space and public uses upon the sale of existing school property in order to preserve school playing fields as developed open spaces.

**Implementing Strategies:**

- O.I.3.1 -ps Overlay zone: Use the -ps Public School Overlay Zone to keep closed school sites in public ownership and to preserve the playing fields as developed recreation space.

Time Frame: On-going  
Responsible Party: Planning, Parks and Town Council

**ISSUE 4:**

The Town's Hillside areas are unique and add to the quality of life of Town residents and visitors. Open space areas in the Hillsides should be preserved. The viewsheds and existing character of the hillsides should be maintained in open space planning.

**Goal:**

- O.G.4.1 To provide for open space areas in the hillsides. The provision of these open space areas should not detract from the existing character of the Town's hillsides.

**Policies:**

- O.P.4.1 Preserve the natural open space character of prominent visible hillside lands.
- O.P.4.2 Protect the natural ridge lines as defined in the Hillside Specific Plan.
- O.P.4.3 Preserve open space in hillside areas as natural open space.
- O.P.4.4 Require the provision of permanent open space in hillside developments.
- O.P.4.5 Preserve natural open space character of hillside lands, including natural topography, natural vegetation, wildlife habitats and migration corridors, and viewsheds.

**Implementing Strategies:**

- O.I.4.1 Ridge lines: Preservation of ridge lines, trees and open space along scenic roadways shall be considered in reviewing every proposed development or circulation system improvement.

Time Frame: On-going  
Responsible Party: Planning and Deciding Body

- O.I.4.2 Open space dedications: In all hillside developments, require the dedication of open space in fee or as an easement to protect unique natural features, habitats and migration corridors, and to preserve the rural atmosphere.

Time Frame: On-going  
Responsible Party: Parks, Planning and Deciding Body

- O.I.4.3 Hillside Standards: Expand Hillside Development Standards to preserve natural open space as part of residential development standards.

Time Frame: 2001-2002  
Responsible Party: Parks and Planning

**ISSUE 5:**

Although the Town of Los Gatos is generally considered to be builtout, open space areas must be taken into consideration for all future development decisions. The Town should make open space preservation a priority in all development projects.

**Goal:**

- O.G.5.1 To ensure that the provision of open space be considered in all development decisions within the Town.

**Policies:**

- O.P.5.1 Promote private open space in all planning decisions.
- O.P.5.2 Consider effects on watershed areas, wildlife habitats, and migration corridors before allowing development of any open space.
- O.P.5.3 Consider health, welfare, and public safety in the design of open space facilities.
- O.P.5.4 Provide permanent common open space in high-density developments.
- O.P.5.5 Encourage the use of innovative, development techniques which will provide open space within individual developments, public or private.

**Implementing Strategies:**

- O.I.5.1 Development Reviews: Evaluate development projects to determine the benefit of requiring open space dedication.

Time Frame: On-going  
Responsible Party: Planning

O.I.5.2 Hillside Standards: Evaluate Hillside Standards to include measures that address open space in new development.

Time Frame: On-going

Responsible Party: Planning

O.I.5.3 Open Space Preservation: Include conditions on new development projects to preserve open space.

Time Frame: On-going

Responsible Party: Planning